



# The 2003 Year in Review

## Michigan Department of State



Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land came to Lansing to make government work for **you**. And based on her first-year results, Department of State customers have a lot to be happy about.

Since becoming Michigan's 41<sup>st</sup> Secretary of State in January 2003, Land's commitment to provide taxpayers with the best possible service has been felt statewide. Whether it's helping you to avoid standing in line at a branch office or making our roads safer, Land never stops working for her customers.

### PROTECTING OUR TAX DOLLARS

*"A good start for Terri Land: Secretary of State has right focus on customer service, solid elections"*

Grand Rapids Press;  
January 27, 2003

*"Secretary of State is hands-on administrator..."*

*"After nearly eight months on the job, Land has not only brought high-tech innovations to the 1,800-employee department; she's also been a hands-on manager, bringing a personal touch to all 173 branch offices."*

Detroit News;  
August 21, 2003

Secretary Land sees her stewardship of our hard-earned tax dollars as a sacred trust. She's always looking for ways to make the department operate more efficiently – but never at the expense of providing first-rate service. Some of the ways Land moved to make the best use of our tax dollars include:

- **Canceling the 2004 presidential primary election:** Land was a leading advocate of canceling Michigan's 2004 presidential primary election, a move that saves taxpayers roughly \$7 million. With President George W. Bush not expected to face primary opposition, and Michigan Democrats using a closed caucus system, Land argued that conducting a primary in 2004 would be a waste of money. It's refreshing to see a leader who's not afraid to defend taxpayers by thinking creatively!
- **Consolidating Lansing office space:** Everyone wins when the state can save money **and** enhance customer convenience. That's why Land moved forward on a plan that consolidates department office space in Lansing. The consolidation lets the state of Michigan fill vacant space in state-owned buildings and reduce the number of private leases. Combining the department's space from six offices to two eliminates \$1.3 million annually in rent paid to private owners. In addition to a more efficient use of space and resources, consolidating offices makes it much easier for customers to do business with the department.
- **Managing budget reductions:** Michigan's tight budget demands leaders who address the problem without sacrificing essential services. Immediately upon taking office in January 2003, Land began managing a department budget cut of more than \$400,000. Rather than make taxpayers feel the brunt of the pain, Land focused on making internal adjustments, such as reducing the number of department administrations from four to three. Under the governor's latest Executive Order, the department must deal with another budget reduction of nearly \$290,000. Land will again explore all options to protect services to customers.



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*"Land's decision to save state funds (by eliminating her name from the signs)... could save taxpayers some money in the future."*

Ann Arbor News;  
April 18, 2003

*"Strip system to ease license renewal lines.... Customers seeking driver's license renewals might be spending less time at the Secretary of State"*

The State News  
June 5, 2003

*"This week, she unveiled new office signs .... this time with signs that simply read 'Secretary of State, www.Michigan.gov/sos' We applaud Land for setting her ego aside to end a long standing practice. "*

Kalamazoo Gazette;  
March 31, 2003

- **Alternative transactions:** Conducting business without having to visit a branch office is convenient for customers. But it's smart business as well. For example, Land emphasizes alternative forms of registration renewal, such as using the Web, telephone and mail. The average cost of using an alternative transaction is just one-third of what it costs to do business in a branch office. So the more transactions we can move out of branch offices, the better it is for taxpayers. And the number of alternative transactions in fiscal year 2003 climbed 17 percent from the previous year!
- **Branch office leases:** Land wants taxpayers to get the biggest bang for their buck. To make sure that every penny is spent wisely, the department is continually reviewing all of its office leases to make sure they offer Michigan residents the best deal.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

Taxpayers and customers deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect. That's why the Secretary's priority is to provide service that is efficient and convenient. Land never forgets that she works for Michigan residents!

- **Branch office visits:** Land came to Lansing armed with ideas for better serving Michigan residents. But she also wanted to hear directly from customers across the state, as well as department employees. So she visited all 173 branch offices during her first 8 months in office, logging more than 15,000 miles! The input she received was valuable, and is playing a big role in Land's strategy to deliver top-notch service.
- **Branch office improvements:** As part of the Secretary's branch office tour, she was able to view firsthand the facilities that customers and employees see every day. In areas needing attention, Land is following up by working with landlords to repair parking lots, improve lighting, and provide timely snow removal.
- **Renew Online:** Land wants you online rather than in line. To help customers understand the benefits of doing business online, the Secretary launched an awareness campaign titled "Skip the Trip! Save Time, Renew Online!" The Secretary believes that doing business from the comfort of your home beats going to a branch office any day. The campaign is working. The department processed 17 percent more online renewals in fiscal year 2003 than in the previous year.
- **Promoting the Web address:** Not everyone is aware of the department's online services. Land wants to change that, and she's doing so in a common-sense, cost-effective way. The department is incorporating its [www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos) Web address on branch office signs to highlight online services. This visibility helps to educate the public about their options. Best of all, the Web addresses is added as the signs are being updated, so there's no added cost! It also ends the tradition of having the name of the current Secretary of State on signs, eliminating the need for future Secretary 's of State to spend tax dollars to update the signs.



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*"Fresh ideas for better service should be expected when Michigan gets a new secretary of state, and Terri Lynn Land seems to have a wealth of them. After a high-energy visit to all 173 branches, she is proposing some improvements that are clearly in the customers' interest...."*

Flint Journal;  
September 4, 2003

*"We fervently applaud Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, who wants to tighten regulation of Michigan's out-of-control, fund-raising license plate program."*

Petoskey News-  
Review; October 28,  
2003

*"State to provide farmers faster turnaround"*

Gladwin County  
Record; September  
24, 2003

- **Permanent trailer plates:** In addition to providing a cost-savings for most trailer owners, the new system of issuing permanent trailer plates cuts down on branch office traffic – shortening the time you spend in line! Since the trailer registrations are no longer renewed annually, branch office staff have roughly 1 million **fewer** transactions to worry about. That means faster service for **you**!
- **Assisting ethnic populations:** Land wants your interaction with the department to be as pleasant as possible. So she's putting multilingual signs in branch offices to help ethnic customers overcome language barriers, helping them to more easily understand procedures and requirements. By placing the signs so they are visible from outside of the offices, non-English speaking customers can immediately determine what they need to do. That saves them time and needless frustration once they begin a transaction.
- **Eliminating backlogs:** Farmers and farm service agencies are enjoying a faster turnaround time when filing Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) statements with the department. The processing time for filing UCC statements has been reduced from weeks to mere days thanks to an automated and more accurate UCC system.
- **Robbery awareness training:** The safety of our employees and customers tops Land's list of priorities. The Secretary has implemented robbery awareness training for branch office managers, which helps to ensure that they can act in a manner that provides for the security of everyone in an office should a robbery occur.
- **Improving veterans plates:** Veterans are rightfully proud of their service to our nation, and they deserve a fitting tribute. Under Land's leadership, the department is producing specialty license plates that incorporate military service designations in a permanent manner. Prior to converting to this new manufacturing process, decals were issued for veterans to affix to their plates. The new method addresses concerns that had been raised regarding the decals' appearance and durability.
- **Notary Act Rewrite:** Good government is important to Land. The department worked with county clerks to draft appropriate language for the first extensive rewrite of Michigan's Notary Act in decades. The resulting legislation – House Bill 4938 – streamlines the application process and allows the department to conduct background checks to ensure suitable candidates.



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## TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS

*"If you think the function of the Office of the Michigan Secretary of State is limited only to license plates and registering to vote, think again. The office also is concerned about protecting the motoring public, both on and off the road. It's an ongoing process as witnessed by recent announcements from Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land."*  
Detroit News; July 23, 2003

*"The new secretary of state is Michigan's biggest proponent of e-government, or using the Internet so people can go online instead of standing in line to do business with the state."*  
Detroit Free Press; May 30, 2003

*"New driver test will cut fraud, costs... We have to support any state effort that can help reduce fraud while at the same time cutting costs to the taxpayer."*  
Battle Creek Enquirer; July 22, 2003

Harnessing technology saves limited dollars and makes it easier to do business with the department. Secretary Land continues to make the use of technology a cornerstone of her administration.

- **A recognized leader:** In May 2003, just 5 months after taking office, Land was recognized by the Detroit Free Press as one of Michigan's Top 5 technology innovators.
- **Upgrading antiquated systems:** The department's mainframe computer system is about 30 years old – making it woefully inadequate to provide customers with the service that they deserve. Land worked with the Legislature to secure funding that will assist the department in upgrading its computer system. Helping you is what the department is all about, and a modern mainframe system will let us do just that.
- **Plate It Your Way:** The department is making it simple for you to select a personalized license plate. Plate It Your Way, an online service, lets customers check the availability of personalized plates from the comfort of their homes. It eliminates the hassle of coming to a branch office, only to find out that your first choice for a personalized plate is already taken!
- **Magnetic strip readers:** All branch offices have been upgraded with technology that reads the information stored on the back of driver's licenses. That means department employees can more quickly and accurately retrieve the necessary information. From the customers' standpoint, it means a shorter wait when renewing a driver's license!
- **MiBOB:** Your time is meaningful, and Secretary Land doesn't want you to spend it at a branch office. So the department has launched a pilot project called MiBOB, or Michigan Branch Office Business. Located at select sites in Grand Rapids in Detroit, MiBOB is a self-service station that lets eligible customers renew their driver's licenses or vehicle registrations with the swipe of a credit card. It prints your tabs on the spot!
- **Research and development:** Land understands that innovation demands leadership and creativity. To find new ways to offer better service, Land has established a research and development center in Grand Rapids. This office will test training, equipment and other customer-service initiatives.
- **Test scrambling:** Land is using technology to make our roads safer. The department is now using computers to scramble written driver-knowledge test questions to deter fraud, bolster security and cut costs.



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*"The Michigan Secretary of State office has come up with a real head-slapper. To make it easier for party store clerks and bartenders to screen underage drinkers, make their driver's licenses look different ... It makes so much sense."*

Bay City Times;  
July 18, 2003

*"Secretary Land moves to protect consumers"*  
The Township  
Times; August 13,  
2003

*"Unlicensed car dealers are asking for trouble"*  
Detroit News;  
October 21, 2003

*"To Land's credit, she has never stopped her pursuit of election reform"*  
Muskegon Chronicle;  
August 21, 2003

*"Election Days: A limit of four per year makes sense for state"*  
Detroit Free Press;  
June 23, 2003

### SAFEGUARDING FAMILIES

Secretary Land serves as Michigan's chief motor vehicle administrator, and it's a job she takes seriously. She's worked with partners across Michigan to keep our families safe, and also to safeguard the rights of consumers.

- **Vertical ID:** A new law requires the department to issue minors a vertical driver's license. The program is designed to keep adult-only products like alcohol and tobacco out of underage hands. Land joined with stakeholders from across the state to launch an awareness campaign called "We Check to Protect!" She also appeared in statewide public service announcements to spread the word.
- **Tougher drunken-driving standard:** When Michigan's tough new .08 blood-alcohol content law took effect in September 2003, Land joined a coalition of safety advocates to publicize the change. Land appeared at a Capitol news conference to help educate the public regarding the new standard.
- **Cracking down on scam artists:** Laws are in place to protect the rights of consumers, and Land is making sure that they are enforced. In July 2003, the department suspended the license of a Royal Oak auto repair facility that was allegedly charging customers for unnecessary repairs. In another example, the department assisted 116 consumers in obtaining titles after a Detroit business was found to be preying on people with bad credit. The company would finance vehicles beyond the customers' financial means, and later reclaim the vehicles through the dealership's affiliated repossession company.

### INCLUSIVE, EFFICIENT ELECTIONS

Voting is key to democracy, and Secretary Land is making sure that everyone who wants to vote has that opportunity. Her ambitious agenda is eliminating needless barriers to voting, as well as enhancing the efficiency and integrity of Michigan's process.

- **HAVA:** The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) offers Michigan a once-in-a-lifetime chance to upgrade its elections process, and Land is at the forefront in making sure that Michigan is eligible for assistance. Her appointment of a 30-member advisory committee resulted in a draft state plan that will lead to Michigan's receipt of critical federal dollars.
- **Consolidated elections:** Land is a longtime advocate of consolidating local elections to save money and provide voters with greater certainty regarding election dates. After renewing her call for such a change this year, the Legislature took action on a package of bills that limits the number of local elections to four a year.



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*"Optical scanners for all is the only way to go Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land has put her finger on the most important issue her office faces: streamlining Michigan's voting system into the best in the nation."*

Muskegon Chronicle,  
August 21, 2003

*"To kick off April as Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Month, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land urges residents to become unsung heroes by enrolling in Michigan's donor registry."*

Dowagiac Daily  
News; April 8, 2003

*"Secretary Land welcomes newest members of 'American Family'"* Hastings  
Banner; July 10, 2003

*"Initiatives show we can all be life savers"*  
The Grand Rapids  
Press; April 7, 2003

- **Statewide voting standard:** There are currently five different voting methods in use across Michigan. That leads to inefficiencies and inconvenience. To assist both election workers and voters, Land announced that Michigan is selecting one statewide voting standard. The optical scan method selected by Land will allow counties now using outdated systems such as paper and punch cards to upgrade to more modern technology.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Secretary Land believes that the department's responsibilities to Michigan go beyond the basics of driver's licenses and election administration. She is continually working for the betterment of Michigan and its residents through a variety of initiatives.

- **Organ donation:** The cause of organ donation is important to Land, who partnered with stakeholders in April 2003 to conduct a highly successful "Buddy Day" awareness campaign. More than 150 donors, recipients and family members – called "buddies" – turned out for the events at nearly 100 department branch offices. The campaign generated positive coverage in dozens of newspapers and more than 40 television and radio stations. Land also has created a special committee that is advising the department on organ donation matters, and assists in setting goals. Land has set the goal of reaching 1 million names for the state's organ donor registry and is actively recruiting volunteers.
- **Welcoming new citizens:** Land was on hand in July 2003 to welcome 700 new U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony in Detroit. The Secretary greeted the newest members of America's family, and even provided on-site voter registration assistance.
- **Angel's Night:** When Michigan's largest city asked for help, Land stepped up to the plate. The Secretary joined with the city of Detroit to launch a successful 2003 Angel's Night program, which effectively reduced the incidents of vandalism in the city prior to Halloween. Several department branch offices pitched in by displaying Angels' Night posters and providing information for residents interested in volunteering for the effort.
- **Helping the needy:** Under Land's direction, the Department of State was a proud participant in the 2003 Harvest Gathering food collection drive. The effort netted more than 300,000 pounds of food and more than \$250,000 for needy families statewide. Of those totals, the department collected over 14,700 pounds of food with the help of statewide branch offices.